

# Penkovsky Closely Associated With Top Officers Who Are Now Under Suspicion in Soviet Union

## Doomed Colonel Showed Himself Years Ago as Critic of Kremlin Policies—Leaders May Have Been Negligent in Dealing With Him

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**CONDEMNED TO DEATH** by the Russians as a scientist who fell into espionage through moral degradation, Col. Oleg Penkovsky appears in fact to have been a professional soldier of high standing who betrayed his government because he opposed its policies.

Penkovsky was convicted by the military collegium of the Supreme Court of the U.S.S.R. after a four-day trial last week. Available information suggests that the internal significance of the trial is fully comparable to the significance that was attached to the Alger Hiss case in this country. The known facts even point to the possibility of a military coup d'etat within the Soviet Union.

Penkovsky was politically motivated and he was closely associated with some of his country's most important military officers. The circumstances indicate at the least that major officials were negligent in dealing with him and possibly that a concealed conspiracy of impressive dimensions has been at work.

A DESCENDANT of pre-revolutionary Russian nobility and a much-decorated war hero, Penkovsky first came to Western notice when he served as an assistant military attache in Ankara, Turkey, in 1955 and 1956. He revealed himself then as a critic of his country's policies. He spoke of his disgust and hatred for the brutal aspects of the Kremlin's policies and for the hypocrisy of the slogans about peace and Socialist progress. He spoke of himself as a patriotic Russian who longed for democratic freedom and honesty in public life.

He differed openly with his superior officer in Ankara, Gen. Rubenko, and he was not promoted after being relieved of this duty. But the support that he enjoyed from the military hierarchy was evidenced by his reassignment, after he returned to Moscow, to a highly sensitive

post. He was assigned to the State Committee for the Coordination of Scientific Research Work, an apparatus of military intelligence, in a role that enabled him to meet foreign scientists and business men and to travel abroad.

The men who appear to have fallen under suspicion of protecting him include Gen. I. A. Serov, former chief of the Committee for State Security and chief of military intelligence until Penkovsky's arrest last December. Serov is reported to be under arrest. His son, who represents the Russian airline Aeroflot in Helsinki, has recently been summoned home.

THE CHIEF OF STAFF of the Red army and Serov's immediate superior, Marshal Matvei Zakharov, was removed from his post in March and the chief marshal of the artillery, Sergel Varonov, also is said to have been dismissed. He was Penkovsky's commander in the war and a close friend. It is further believed that Penkovsky's superior in the state scientific committee, D. M. Gvishiana, is in trouble. Gvishiana is the son-in-law of Aleksy Kosygin, the first deputy chairman of the U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers.

Just as the Hiss case had ramifications in this country, the Penkovsky affair would seem to hold the potential of seriously weakening the political and military leadership in Moscow. Many major officials will be subject to public speculation on the extent of their involvement. In Washington it is considered pos-

sible that the politicians may use the case as leverage against the group of Soviet professional officers who have questioned with increasing boldness the civilian intrusions on military judgments.

The Penkovsky case has lent substance to previous suspicions of the existence of a group of army officers who are hostile to the control of the party and unsympathetic to its aims. This group appears to have survived the past purges and the ouster of Marshal Georgi Zhukov in 1957 and to believe that Premier Khrushchev would not dare at this time to initiate a new purge against its members.

THESE SUSPICIONS were sharpened by Marshal Rodion Malinovsky's diminution of Khrushchev's role in the Battle of Volgograd (Stalingrad) in a recent magazine article in which he praised Zhukov highly. A little known officer named Col. M. Skidro, writing in the Feb. 26 issue of the Communist of the Armed Forces, asserted that although technical developments had forced political leaders to become military specialists, they had also forced military leaders to be "active conductors of the policy of the state." He wrote that this role on the part of military leaders is growing at this time.

Quoting Friedrich Engels, Skidro wrote that the role of the military leaders may be greatest "at the moment of failure when the army has suffered defeat and is forced to retreat." It is believed he was referring to the setback in Cuba and possibly suggesting a dramatic extension of military authority.

Many rumors are circulating in Moscow that Zhukov, now 68 years old, is to be brought back to active duty. If this occurs, many will believe that the popular marshal, retired in disgrace for his support of the "anti-party" faction, is being used by Khrushchev to attract the dissident officers who may be considering action against his regime.

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